



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES  
**BUCHAREST • ROMANIA**

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## American Citizen Services eNewsletter

### NO DOUBLE STANDARD

*By Jim Gray, Consul General*

In the midst of crises that afflict the world today, we expect authorities to assess the threats, take appropriate action, and warn those who might be threatened. What is to ensure, however, that warnings provided by the U.S. Government to members of the U.S. Government are also shared with the private U.S. citizen community who might also be affected?



“No Double Standard” is the maxim that governs our treatment of threat information. With a few narrowly defined exceptions, this policy accords all Americans, including potential travelers from the United States, access to the same security threat information made available to official or non-official Americans in the affected country. Information on credible and specific security threats to the American public or to American interests overseas, if they have not been or cannot be countered, will be made available to those persons or interests at possible risk.

A recent example of this would be the series of warnings disseminated by the Department of State with regard to the situation in Egypt. The first information was in the form of a Travel Alert, which provided information to the American public about early developments in Egypt that were also being shared within the U.S. government. As the situation deteriorated it was decided to allow the “authorized departure” of USG dependents from Egypt, a decision which then required the release of a Travel Warning advising our public of that fact, as well as the procedures to seek U.S. Embassy assistance if required in departing the country. When “authorized departure” transitioned to “ordered departure,” a new Travel Warning was issued to again advise the American public of that development.

Happily, we have not had such a crisis in or near Romania. However, we take the No Double Standard policy seriously and information that our Regional Security Office provides to the embassy community regarding occasional demonstrations or traffic alerts is also posted on our website at [http://romania.usembassy.gov/acs/demonstration\\_notices.html](http://romania.usembassy.gov/acs/demonstration_notices.html). As always, we also encourage all U.S. citizens to register for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program to facilitate our communications with you in the event of an emergency (<http://romania.usembassy.gov/acs/registration.html>).

All **non-emergency** ACS services (renewal of U.S. passports, Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, notarial, etc.) are provided by appointment **ONLY**.

Please follow [this link](#) to make an appointment with the consular section staff.

#### AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES

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E-mail: [acsbucharest@state.gov](mailto:acsbucharest@state.gov)

Tel: +40- 21- 200 3300

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In the event of an emergency involving an American citizen, please, call +40-21-200-3433

For information about public hours, please visit <http://romania.usembassy.gov/acs/index.html>.



# IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO THINK ABOUT TAXES



*It may sound as a worn out cliché but if there is one certainty in life, it's the fact that you will have to file taxes. It's never too early to think about it. The IRS Website offers a lot of useful information, including When, Where and How to File for Americans and Alien Residents living overseas. Here's a couple of handy tips from <http://www.irs.gov>.*

“April 15 of each year is the due date for filing your Federal individual income tax return if your tax year ends December 31st. Your return is considered filed timely if the envelope is properly addressed and postmarked no later than April 15. If you use a fiscal year (which is a year ending on the last day of any month other than December), your return is due on or before the 15th day of the fourth month after the close of your fiscal year. If the due date falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the due date is delayed until the next business day (i.e., Tax Year 2006 was due April 17, 2007).

If you cannot file by the due date of your return, then you can request an *extension of time to file*. However, **an extension of time to file is not an extension of time to pay**. You will owe interest on any past-due tax and you may be subject to a late-payment penalty if timely payment is not made. To receive an automatic 6-month extension of time to file your return, you can file **Form 4868** (PDF), *Application for Automatic Extension of Time to File U.S. Individual Income Tax Return*, by the due date of your return. For more information, refer to the Form 4868 Instructions.

**Everyone can e-file, and everyone can e-file individual tax returns for free! Visit <http://www.irs.gov/efile/index.html> and learn about the safest, fastest and easiest way to submit individual tax returns.**

If you are a United States citizen or resident alien, who is either: (1) living outside of the United States and Puerto Rico and your main place of business or post of duty is outside of the United States and Puerto Rico; or (2) in military or naval services on duty outside of the United States and Puerto Rico on the due date of your return, you are allowed an automatic 2-month extension until June 15 to file your return and pay any tax due. For additional information refer to **Publication 54**, *Tax Guide for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad*. If you use this automatic 2-month extension, you **must** attach a statement to your return explaining which of the two situations qualify you for the extension. For additional information on extensions, refer to **Topic 304**, *Extensions of Time to File Your Tax Return*.”

*Although the Embassy does not recommend or endorse individual preparers or firms, and assumes no responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the firm or its employees, we would like to share with you some information about the only tax assistance organization that we are aware of that handles Romanian taxes. **Our purpose is simply to offer you a resource to assist you with your tax needs.***

**Taxback.com** (<http://www.taxback.com>)

Address: Republicii, 24  
400 015 Cluj-Napoca

Tel: +40 264 591 297  
Green Line: 0800 842 842 (toll-free)

Fax: +40 264 593 973

E-mail: [info@taxback.com](mailto:info@taxback.com)



## PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Even when you are in the safety of your home, natural disasters can strike. Earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, are only some of the natural disasters threatening the safety of Americans abroad. When natural disasters occur abroad, the Department of State and U.S. embassies/consulates in the affected country stand ready around the clock to track and assist affected American citizens.

Our Consular section regularly conducts disaster preparedness exercises for its staff. As we prepare to better serve you if disaster strikes, there are certain things that **you** should do as well. Planning ahead and knowing what to do during an earthquake, for example, may save your life.

### Six Ways to Plan Ahead

#### *1. Check for Hazards in the Home*

- Fasten shelves securely to walls.
- Place large or heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Store breakable items such as bottled foods, glass, and china in low, closed cabinets with latches.
- Hang heavy items such as pictures and mirrors away from beds, couches, and anywhere people sit.
- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Repair defective electrical wiring and leaky gas connections. These are potential fire risks.
- Secure a water heater by strapping it to the wall studs and bolting it to the floor.
- Repair any deep cracks in ceilings or foundations. Get expert advice if there are signs of structural defects.
- Store weed killers, pesticides, and flammable products securely in closed cabinets with latches and on bottom shelves.

#### *2. Identify Safe Places Indoors and Outdoors*

- Under sturdy furniture such as a heavy desk or table.
- Against an inside wall.
- Away from where glass could shatter around windows, mirrors, pictures, or where heavy bookcases or other heavy furniture could fall over.
- In the open, away from buildings, trees, telephone and electrical lines, overpasses, or elevated expressways.

#### *3. Educate Yourself and Family Members*

- Contact your local authorities for more information on earthquakes. Also find out how to protect your property from earthquakes.
- Teach children how and when to call emergency services, i.e. ambulance, police, or fire department and which radio station to tune to for emergency information.
- Teach all family members how and when to turn off gas, electricity, and water.

#### *4. Have Disaster Supplies on Hand*

- First aid kit.
- Portable radio.

- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Emergency food and water.
- Nonelectric can opener.
- Essential medicines.
- Cash and credit cards.
- Sturdy shoes.

### ***5. Develop an Emergency Communication Plan***

- In case family members are separated from one another during an earthquake (*a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school*), develop a plan for reuniting after the disaster.
- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.

### ***6. Help Your Community Get Ready***

- Publish a special section in your local newspaper with emergency information on earthquakes. Localize the information by printing the phone numbers of local emergency services offices, the Red Cross, and hospitals.
- Conduct a week-long series on locating hazards in the home.
- Work with local emergency services and Red Cross officials to prepare special reports for people with mobility impairments on what to do during an earthquake.
- Provide tips on conducting earthquake drills in the home.
- Interview representatives of the gas, electric, and water companies about shutting off utilities.
- Work together in your community to apply your knowledge to building codes, retrofitting programs, hazard hunts, and neighborhood and family emergency plans.



**The Embassy will be closed on Apr 25, May 30, Jun 13, Jul 4, Aug 15, Sep 5, Oct 10, Nov 11, Nov 24 and Dec 1 in observance of U.S. and Romanian official holidays.**





**We need your help spreading the word around. The U.S. Visa Lottery (also known as Diversity Visa Program or DV Lottery) has become very popular among the foreign nationals, including Romanians. Chances are you know somebody who submitted an application for the lottery. If your Romanian or other foreign national friends, acquaintances or colleagues ask you about the program, please share the following word of caution with them:**

“The Department of State, Office of Visa Services, advises the public of a notable increase in fraudulent emails and letters sent to Diversity Immigrant Visa (DV) program (Visa Lottery) applicants. The scammers behind these fraudulent emails and letters are posing as the U.S. government in an attempt to extract payment from DV applicants. All applicants should be familiar with [information about DV scams provided by the Federal Trade Commission](#). Applicants are encouraged to review the [rules and procedures for the DV](#) program so that you know what to expect, when to expect it, and from whom.

Finally, remember that all DV-2012 applicants will not receive a notification letter from the U.S. government but must [check their status online](#). DV Entry Status Check will only be provided through the Department of State secure online site, <http://www.dvlottery.state.gov>.”

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

### ***Can the Embassy help me with an SSA issue?***



The Embassy receives Social Security Administration (SSA) claims for retirement, disability and survivor benefits, Social Security number applications, all post-entitlement activities affecting beneficiaries under the various programs, i.e., changes of address, and non-receipt of check allegations and death terminations. At this time, direct deposit of benefits is not available but it may change in the near future.

If you would like information on how to apply for social security retirement benefits, or for instructions on how to replace, correct, or change your name on your Social Security Card, see the [Social Security Administration \(SSA\) website](#). This site also has an easy-to-download form ([SS-5-SF](#)) which tells you what kind of [identification](#) you need to send along with your application form.

More information about SSA benefits is available at <http://romania.usembassy.gov/acs/federal-benefits.html>.

If you have any questions, please, email us at [ACSBucharest@state.gov](mailto:ACSBucharest@state.gov).